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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Guatemala
SUBJECT "Guatemala News Notes"PLACE ACQUIRED
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1. "Impacto, discussing the uneasiness that prevailed in Guatemala City because of the numerous searchings of houses and detentions in what the government belatedly announced was a conspiracy against the Arbenz regime, commented editorially: 'The government must not lose its head,' and deplored the kidnappings by government agents of persons from their homes and public thoroughfares. Impacto recalled how the famous kidnapping of the Spanish monarchist Calvo Sotello by agents of the Spanish Republic set off the bloody Spanish Civil War and said: 'This must not happen in Guatemala because it would ruin us, destroy us.' Impacto says it understands the situation: 'The government is at an important crossroad; it faces a difficult problem in its foreign policy. Also we know that the disorganized opposition is trying to win positions in the event of an unexpected overthrow of the current regime. In this circumstance it is natural that there is activity to discover the truth, to learn where the enemy will arrive, but all this must be done honestly and forthrightly.'
2. "The newspaper Mundo Libre editorially inquires why the government for more than a month had been hinting of conspiracies against it and answered the question itself saying: 'It appears most likely that this is propagated to justify in Guatemala a "Boquetazo" even more disastrous and bloody than that in Colombia... The leaders can be sure that something is cooking in the pot of the Communists and their allies in the revolutionary parties.'
3. "The Communist chief Victor Manuel Gutiérrez, who also is Secretary General of the CGTG and only recently returned from Moscow, accused the United Fruit Company of leading an armed plot against Guatemala when he addressed the opening of the second labor conference. He said the plotting was sponsored by 'the imperialistic company whose agents were poised on the borders of Honduras.' He defended the Arbenz government. He said high officials of the United Fruit Company sought to help traitors win with arms what they could not win with votes. Significantly, Gutiérrez spoke of the Soviet Union in laudatory terms; the congratulatory messages received included a cable from the Moscow Central Council.

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4. "The government issued a white paper claiming the plot was to invade Guatemala from the Pacific coast and neighboring countries and accused General Ydigoras Fuentetaja, defeated presidential candidate against Arbenz in 1950, and Carlos Castillo Armas, of leading the movement. It stated they were assisted by other Central American governments, particularly Nicaragua and President Somoza. The headquarters of the plotters was in Managua. Photostats were exhibited seeking to prove the complicity of those named in the charges. These charges recall similar accusations made following the abortive uprisings in Salama in March 1952, and the tense atmosphere that prevailed in November 1953, when military squads rushed to the coast to ward off rumored landings and highways and railway rights of way were put under guard.
5. "The round-up of various persons netted mostly those known for their anti-Communist views. It was not officially confirmed until five days after the initial rumors in the press by Minister of Government, Augusto Charnaud MacDonald; Charnaud claimed that various arrests were the result of the 'discovery of a subversive plot against the government,' but the government then did not appear too anxious to publicize the incident. For example, on the very day that Charnaud MacDonald was discussing the conspiracy, Col Rogelio Cruz Wer, Chief of the Guardia Civil, was protesting: 'There are no such conspiracies; nothing has happened and nothing is going to happen.' He denied the police had made arrests. However, Charnaud said Roberto Castillo, Director of radio Station Ciros, had been apprehended on 23 Jan 54, but later released. Horacio Córdova, who sponsors an anti-Communist program on one of Guatemala City's radio stations, and Roberto Vizcaino, Director of Radio Continental, also were arrested and put in prison.
6. "The detained include the four leaders of the recently organized Unión Nacional de Trabajadores Libres, who challenged the Communist Party leaders to explain the part they play in Guatemalan life. These men are Ruben Villatoro, Enrique Coronado, Ramiro Aguilar and Miguel Angel Quiron. Warrants were issued for the apprehension of three members of the City Council, Luis Beltranena, Ramiro Castellanos, and Miguel Camacho Labbe. Beltranena and Camacho took refuge in the Salvadorean embassy and three days later Beltranena and Camacho went to El Salvador. The anti-Communist Mayor of Guatemala City, Juan Luis Lizzeralde, was appointed by the City Council to investigate the government persecution of his colleagues. The ex-director of the weekly Tribune of Truth, José Guzmán, the anti-Communist student Ricardo Lara Gálvez, the attorney Guillermo Dávila Córdova, the businessman Gabriel Fernández also were arrested. The retired newspaperman Carlos Gandara Duran took asylum in the Nicaraguan embassy. Oscar Berger, General Cashier of the Guatemala Social Security Institute, was arrested as he left his home after attending the first communion of his daughters. Shortly after Berger's detention agents of the Guardia Civil searched the house of Miguel Comacho. Also captured were Gabriel Fernández Giovannetti and Neuline Ocarrio Suárez de Fernández. The retired army captain, Enrique Trinidad Oliva, who had been detained earlier in the week, has denied any violation of the traffic laws which was later given by the Guardia Civil as an excuse for arresting him.
7. "Oliva's wife said that when the car was halted, the police opened and shut the door, and immediately afterwards found two hand grenades and a revolver. He said neither he nor his wife use hand grenades and he has not had a pistol since he was cashiered out of the army for his part in the ill-fated Aurora Revolution of 1950. Oliva asked that he be committed to the penitentiary where he thought his life would be more secure in view of his claims he was being framed, than in the detention quarters of the Guardia Civil. Oliva's experience caused Impacto ironically to warn its readers not to open their doors to any strangers in uniform if they didn't want to be blamed for having bombs.
8. "The Communist daily, Tribuna Popular, claimed that a certain number of persons was interrogated to establish the veracity of 'concrete' denunciations about various subversive movements. Tribuna Popular claimed the government thwarted whatever uprising was planned and has the names of a great number of those presumed to be compromised in the conspiracy.

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9. "The Anti-Communist Youth Alliance telegraphed President Arbenz asking his intervention to guarantee civil rights. The same group, together with the Central Committee of Anti-Communist workers invited anti-Communists to meet at the Casa de la Libertad to protest the capture of Horacio de Córdova and other citizens. The directors of various radio stations interviewed Charnaud MacDonald, asking the Minister of Government why there had been detentions of station owners and other citizens and about the veracity of an insistent rumor that all directors of radio stations were to be detained. The directors explained that almost all radio stations have radio newspapers (news broadcasts) for which they sell only the time and have no responsibility for what is said during this period. Charnaud MacDonald replied that the government will question any person who is suspected of being involved in a subversive movement. Also the government is not going to tolerate infractions of the law by any radio stations and said that those connected with radio stations so far detained were apprehended because of complaints they had solicited for funds to overthrow the government under the threat of subjecting non-contributors to future reprisals. He said that after all, radio station directors were only individuals and subject to penalties for violation of the laws. The attorney Ramiro Castellanos González filed suit against Guardia Civil chief Cruz Wer, claiming that he was being persecuted by members of the Guardia Civil. The appellate court accepted the suit and called on Cruz Wer to explain the Guardia Civil action.
10. "President Arbenz notified the recent meeting of the Democratic Front composed of all the government political parties, he was confirming as Secretary General of the presidency Jaime Díaz Rozzotto, accused by his political party, the Renovación Nacional, of political corruption and mismanagement of funds of that organization of which he had been Secretary General. The removal of Díaz Rozzotto had been recommended by Congress as an act of reprimand for political gangsterism.
11. "Although the official version of the shooting of Deputy Guillermo Ovando Arriola, President of Congress, blamed the incident on a rabbit hunter, the accepted version is that he was ambushed at night while driving his jeep alone on the road between Quetzaltenango and Totonicapán. The official version said the shooting had no importance and did not merit the large headlines given it by the newspapers. The unofficial version, however, said the shooting occurred at 12:30 a m when obviously there are no rabbit hunters abroad. The newspaper El Espectador, 20 Jan [54], pointed out that this is not the first time Ovando Arriola has been involved in violence, explaining that he is a shock trooper of the PAR.
12. "The second labor congress was staged by the CGTG the week end of 29-31 Jan [54] and all political parties were invited to send delegates. In the preliminary publicity published by the government press there were statements that Luis Saillant, Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions and of France, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, of the CTAL, and the Italian Communist worker leaders Giuseppe Erudi and Giuseppe Cosadel were invited to be present and to take active participation. Large delegations of Communists were requested from Chile, Ecuador and Colombia. The Ministry of Education has given financial assistance to the CGTG to stage this affair.
13. "The PAR has announced it would not approve the candidacy of Jorge Toriello G. for the mayor of Guatemala City. The PAR prefers Juan de Dios Aguilar or 'any person other than the reactionary' Toriello.
14. "The opposition newspapers claim the current Arbenz regime is threatening the liberty of the press in Guatemala. El Espectador calls public attention to the fact that the principal afternoon newspaper El Imparcial has called upon the Association of Newspapermen of Guatemala to be vigilant and fight for maintenance of civil liberties, especially that of

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freedom of thought. El Espectador comments: 'We have seen in recent days an increase of the threats against the press and newspapermen not connected with the sectarianism that invades the Guatemala October Revolution. The Communists call for violence and destruction of our liberties in their own organ of publicity as well as by some leaders from the speakers' rostrums each time they have an opportunity such as Gutierrez (Communist chief Victor Manuel Gutierrez) the 1st of May last year [1953]. Also there are veiled threats in the official press and government circles. . . The call of Guerra Borges (Alfredo Guerra Borges, Director of the Communist newspaper Tribuna Popular) for the massacre of "traitors" and "reactionaries" and the aggressive measures of some of the prominent leaders of the PRG in the closing minutes of their convention do not have the criminal significance of the exhortations openly made through the editorial columns of the semi-official newspaper Nuestro Diario.

15. "Espectador adds that Nuestro Diario publishes anti-democratic poison from its non-Guatemalan columnists and editorialists whose names are known and whose affiliations and antecedents as agitators of international Communism are well known.
16. "Santos Miguel Lima Bonilla, editor of the weekly La Pulga who was beaten up and seriously injured by four hoodlums in connection with his anti-Communist publication, printed a letter of thanks to those who gave him assistance afterwards and included Colonel Cruz Wer, Director of the Civil Guard, explaining he did so because he was not detained. Mundo Libre called the beating a reappearance of the old vices of the dictators.
17. "The ambassadors of the US and Mexico were not present when Guillermo Toriello received the foreign diplomatic corps in one of his first acts after taking over the foreign ministry. Instead these two nations were represented by charges d'affaires because the ambassadors were absent. Toriello still has not been able to get agreement on Guatemala's participation at the next meeting of the OAS at Caracas."

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